

VZCZCXRO9507
PP RUEHAG RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDBU RUEHLH RUEHNEH RUEHPW RUEHROV RUEHSL
RUEHSR
DE RUEHAH #1354/01 2961407
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 231407Z OCT 09 ZFF5
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3649
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5808
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3516
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 2947
RUEHSF/AMEMBASSY SOFIA 0036
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 4050
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 4021

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 001354

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, PPD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/23/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [SCUL](#) [PHUM](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: GOTX RATCHETS UP PRESSURE OF TASP STUDENTS AND
THEIR PARENTS

REF: A. ASHGABAT 0983

[1](#)B. ASHGABAT 1049

[1](#)C. ASHGABAT 1070

[1](#)D. ASHGABAT 1148

[1](#)E. ASHGABAT 1228

ASHGABAT 00001354 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Charge Sylvia R. Curran for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Over the past two days, several students from the Turkmen American Scholarship Program (TASP) have reported increased pressure from the GOTX. The students, after being denied exit first to the American University in Central Asia (AUCA) and then to the American University in Bulgaria (AUBG) are now facing charges of desertion from the military. Parents of students have also been called in by the local "services" and their employers, both state and private, have been questioned. END SUMMARY.

TASP STUDENTS ARE NOW "DESERTERS"

[1](#)2. (C) On Thursday October 22nd, in an apparently coordinated move, several male TASP students in Ashgabat were approached by the local Military Committees to discuss their draft status. Within the last few months, all of the students had received temporary release from military service using either their acceptance letters from AUCA or AUBG. Every six months, all males that have not yet served in the military that are pursuing degrees must present proof of studies to their local Military Committee in order to get a six month reprieve from military service. Several of the students approached had been students at AUCA for several years and had received multiple release forms, while others had planned on starting their studies this past fall.

[1](#)3. (C) The Military Committees reported that they had been "alerted" by Turkmen Migration Services that the "supposed students" had never left Turkmenistan. One student was told that "that University is not real, it is just a cover to help you avoid military service." The students reportedly were presented with letters identifying violations of military

statutes and told that they had until October 29th to prove they are studying or "face the consequences." One student was told that if he didn't provide an explanation, he would be sent to military prison for one to ten years. Another student speculated that he would be sent to the dangerous border area with Afghanistan.

PARENTS FACE INCREASED SCRUTINY

¶4. (C) In several private meetings, parents and students described recent increases in official pressure. Both parents and students reported having been called into private meetings with local "services," and described similarly unpleasant interrogations about how they live in Bishkek, who they associate with, how they pay for such an expensive school (COMMENT: The USG covers all TASP students with a full scholarship. END COMMENT.), and why they are associated with "the Americans." One parent was told "don't you know those Americans want something, they aren't just giving your child a scholarship simply because they are nice."

¶5. (C) Parents have also faced increased scrutiny at their workplaces. Local "authorities" have called employers, including private firms, and inquired about performance, personality, pay, and whether "the firm needs an excuse to fire someone." As noted in reftel, parents with students currently at AUCA (those that departed the country before the exit denials started in mid-July) were told to choose between their government jobs or AUCA.

¶6. (C) COMMENT: Given the common approach from several distinct Military Committees, it is obvious that this was a coordinated action against TASP students. Threats of prison

ASHGABAT 00001354 002.2 OF 002

are moving the TASP problem into another realm. Clearly someone in the GOTX is interested in making the lives of the students and their families as difficult as possible. END COMMENT.
CURRAN